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Subject:	FW: Ruin Your Health With the Obama Stimulus Plan: Betsy McCaughey
Date:	02/10/2009 07:36 PM

Thanks Barb…I will send it around!!! Jackie

From: Barb Donohue [mailto:bdbdkd@earthlink.net]
Sent: Tuesday, February 10, 2009 4:07 PM
To: Jackie Smith
Subject: Ruin Your Health With the Obama Stimulus Plan: Betsy McCaughey

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Ruin Your Health With the Obama Stimulus Plan: Betsy McCaughey

Commentary by Betsy McCaughey

Feb. 9 (Bloomberg) -- Republican Senators are questioning whether President Barack Obama's stimulus bill contains the right mix of tax breaks and cash infusions to jump-start the economy.

Tragically, no one from either party is objecting to the health provisions slipped in without discussion. These provisions reflect the handiwork of Tom Daschle, until recently the nominee to head the Health and Human Services Department.

Senators should read these provisions and vote against them because they are dangerous to your health. (Page numbers refer to H.R. 1 EH, pdf version).

The bill's health rules will affect "every individual in the United States" (445,

454, 479). Your medical treatments will be tracked electronically by a federal system. Having electronic medical records at your fingertips, easily transferred to a hospital, is beneficial. It will help avoid duplicate tests and errors.

But the bill goes further. One new bureaucracy, the National Coordinator of Health Information Technology, will monitor treatments to make sure your doctor is doing what the federal government deems appropriate and cost effective. The goal is to reduce costs and "guide" your doctor's decisions (442, 446). These provisions in the stimulus bill are virtually identical to what Daschle prescribed in his 2008 book, "Critical: What We Can Do About the Health-Care Crisis." According to Daschle, doctors have to give up autonomy and "learn to operate less like solo practitioners."

Keeping doctors informed of the newest medical findings is important, but enforcing uniformity goes too far.

New Penalties

Hospitals and doctors that are not "meaningful users" of the new system will face penalties. "Meaningful user" isn't defined in the bill. That will be left to the HHS secretary, who will be empowered to impose "more stringent measures of meaningful use over time" (511, 518, 540-541)

What penalties will deter your doctor from going beyond the electronically delivered protocols when your condition is atypical or you need an experimental treatment? The vagueness is intentional. In his book, Daschle proposed an appointed body with vast powers to make the "tough" decisions elected politicians won't make.

The stimulus bill does that, and calls it the Federal Coordinating Council for Comparative Effectiveness Research (190-192). The goal, Daschle's book explained, is to slow the development and use of new medications and technologies because they are driving up costs. He praises Europeans for being more willing to accept "hopeless diagnoses" and "forgo experimental treatments," and he chastises Americans for expecting too much from the health-care system.

Elderly Hardest Hit

Daschle says health-care reform "will not be pain free." Seniors should be more accepting of the conditions that come with age instead of treating them. That means the elderly will bear the brunt.

Medicare now pays for treatments deemed safe and effective. The stimulus bill would change that and apply a cost- effectiveness standard set by the

Federal Council (464).
The Federal Council is modeled after a U.K. board discussed in Daschle's book. This board approves or rejects treatments using a formula that divides the cost of the treatment by the number of years the patient is likely to benefit. Treatments for younger patients are more often approved than treatments for diseases that affect the elderly, such as osteoporosis.
In 2006, a U.K. health board decreed that elderly patients with macular degeneration had to wait until they went blind in one eye before they could get a costly new drug to save the other eye. It took almost three years of public protests before the board reversed its decision.

Hidden Provisions

If the Obama administration's economic stimulus bill passes the Senate in its current form, seniors in the U.S. will face similar rationing. Defenders of the system say that individuals benefit in younger years and sacrifice later.
The stimulus bill will affect every part of health care, from medical and nursing education, to how patients are treated and how much hospitals get paid. The bill allocates more funding for this bureaucracy than for the Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force combined (90-92, 174-177, 181).
Hiding health legislation in a stimulus bill is intentional. Daschle supported the Clinton administration's health-care overhaul in 1994, and attributed its failure to debate and delay. A year ago, Daschle wrote that the next president should act quickly before critics mount an opposition. "If that means attaching a health-care plan to the federal budget, so be it," he said. "The issue is too important to be stalled by Senate protocol."

More Scrutiny Needed

On Friday, President Obama called it "inexcusable and irresponsible" for senators to delay passing the stimulus bill. In truth, this bill needs more scrutiny.
The health-care industry is the largest employer in the U.S. It produces almost 17 percent of the nation's gross domestic product. Yet the bill treats health care the way European governments do: as a cost problem instead of a growth industry. Imagine limiting growth and innovation in the electronics or auto industry during this downturn. This stimulus is dangerous to your health and the economy.
(Betsy McCaughey is former lieutenant governor of New York and is an adjunct senior fellow at the Hudson Institute. The opinions expressed are her own.)

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